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ORIGINAL

RELIEF SCULPTURE

SELECTIONS FROM THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION

In 1954 the sculptor Jacques Lipchitz recalled the impact of Auguste Rodin's monumental relief sculpture on his own artistic development:

> In my youth, as long as I thought that Rodin—like the other sculptors—made only statues, I preferred some of the others to him because their work seemed to me more harmonious. Until one day . . . I understood he was trying to realize *The Gates of Hell*. . . . I discovered there all the riches piled up in great profusion. . . . In short, all the elements of an art in the making were there. . . . To me there is no difference between painting and sculpture.[1]

Not all modern artists have shared Lipchitz's enthusiasm for relief as a bridge between painting and sculpture. Robert Morris, writing in 1966, voiced reservations about the hybrid character of relief sculpture:

> The relief has always been accepted as a viable mode. However, . . . the autonomous and literal nature of sculpture demands that it have its own, equally literal space—not a surface shared with painting.[2]

The art of relief, one of the oldest forms of sculpture, functions as an intermediary between the two-dimensional surface and three-dimensional space. A work of art in which figures or forms project from a flat, supporting surface constitutes a relief. The inherent contradictions between the tactility of sculptural relief and its attachment to the wall have continued to challenge and inspire nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists.

Historically, relief sculpture is allied to architecture and the decorative arts. Over the centuries, works in the relief mode have ranged in scale from the miniature to the monumental. Coins, medallions, and architectural sculpture have all been executed in relief. Because of its hybrid nature, relief sculpture has often been considered subsidiary to sculpture in the round.

During the nineteenth century, relief sculpture began to evolve independently from architecture and decoration. While commissions for relief monuments and portrait medallions continued, the innovative sculptor David d'Angers used the conventional format of the medallion to realize his personal vision of what French writer Luc-Benoist called a plastic biography of his contemporaries. Reliefs by painter-sculptors such as Degas, Meunier, Renoir, Eakins, and Sargent were conceived independently of architectural commissions.

Perhaps the greatest example of nineteenth-century relief sculpture, Auguste Rodin's *Gates of Hell* marked the transition from public monument to personal artistic statement in the development of the modern relief. Originally commissioned in 1880 for the portals of a proposed building to house the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, *The Gates* preoccupied Rodin for more than two decades. They remained unfinished at his death, and the architectural project for which they were commissioned was never built.

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Nevertheless, Rodin succeeded in extending the expressive limits of portal relief sculpture. Modeled in dramatically high relief, each of the extant studies and full-scale posthumous casts of *The Gates of Hell* represents Rodin's personal interpretation of Dante's *Inferno* and Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*. The sculptor conceived this thematic program as a metaphor for the human condition.

Auguste Rodin, *Third Architectural Model for "The Gates of Hell"*

Exploration of new techniques and subject matter further transformed the relief during the late nineteenth century. While most sculptors relied on the techniques of bronze casting, the Italian sculptor Medardo Rosso modeled his reliefs in wax over plaster. Abandoning allegory, literary narrative, and religious imagery, the Belgian artist Constantin Meunier developed a series of realistic reliefs devoted to the labors of the working class.

During the following century, modern artists elevated the relief to a truly independent art form. With the widespread experimentation in sculptural techniques and the revival of direct carving,

Manolo, *Grape Gatherer*

sculptors like Manolo and Enrico Glicenstein chose to carve their reliefs in stone or wood, rather than to cast them in bronze. Saul Baizerman devised and perfected the "direct metal" technique of hammered copper relief sculpture. In the hands of David Smith, relief medallions became the vehicle for an artistic statement against war.

Artists of the international avant-garde transformed the relief into one of the most innovative art forms of the twentieth century. Through their use of new and unorthodox materials, these artists deliberately exploited the hybrid character of the relief. The Cubist sculptors, notably Alexander Archipenko, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Henri Laurens, and Jacques Lipchitz, introduced the use of color in modern relief sculpture. Just as the Cubist painters Picasso and Braque invented the collage, so the Cubist sculptors (Picasso foremost among them) devised the technique of assemblage, or constructed sculpture. Alexander Archipenko even coined the term "sculpto-painting" to denote the synthesis of the two art forms in his polychrome relief assemblages:

> Sculpto-painting is not only a renaissance of the vanished tendency to unite form and color; it is rather a new medium of art, due to a specific conjunction and amalgamation of materials, forms and colors. Esthetically and technically, sculpto-paintings are entirely different from the

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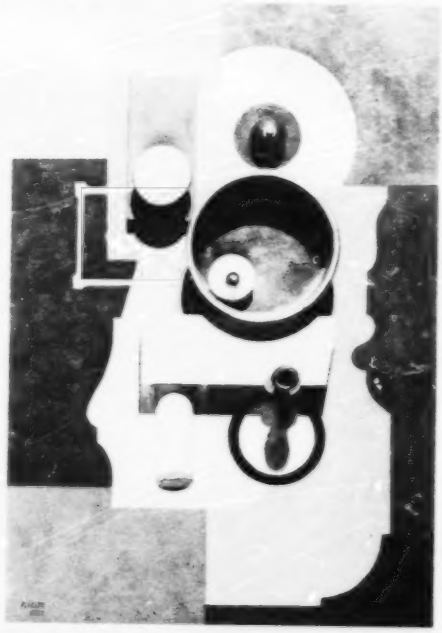
colored reliefs *à la* Della Robbia or the Egyptian and Assyrian. The novelty does not lie in the fact that sculpto-paintings are reliefs, but in the fact that stylistically, conceptionally [sic] and esthetically they are new, as a result of entirely new materials and techniques.[3]

Throughout Europe in the early twentieth century, artists produced abstract relief constructions that reflected utopian principles of geometric design and machine aesthetics. Concurrently, the Dadaists introduced the use of found objects in relief constructions. Abstract artists in the United States continued these European experiments in relief construction. The German-American painter Paul Kelpe produced a series of such reliefs between 1926 and 1932. He has recalled that while living in New Jersey, he was attracted to "all that nice junk piled up in the back of the garage":

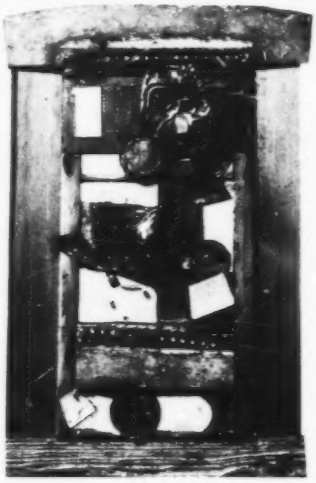
> I decided that it would be real fun to use some of that stuff. . . . All I had to do was to pick up a few pieces and fit them into the kind of painting which I used to do at that time.[4]

For Kelpe, as for the Europeans, the relief construction represented a union of painting and sculpture.



Paul Kelpe, *Construction with Lock and Key*

Contemporary artists continue to expand the repertoire of relief sculpture. Some sculptors, such as Nancy Grossman, perpetuate the Dadaists' use of found objects in collage assemblages. Others, notably Louise Nevelson, have enlarged the scale of relief sculpture to environmental installations. John Okulick uses linear perspective as in painting to produce spatial distortions in three-dimensional relief. The resulting visual tension between solid form and planar recession in his work typifies the dynamic spatial function of the modern relief.



Nancy Grossman, *WCA #32*

Tracing the evolution of the relief from early nineteenth-century portrait medallions to contemporary relief constructions, this selection from the Hirshhorn Museum's collection of relief sculpture demonstrates the continuing vitality of the modern relief as an independent art form.

Notes:

1. Jacques Lipchitz, *Auguste Rodin* (New York: Curt Valentin Gallery, 1954), unpaginated.

2. Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum* 4 (February 1966): 43.

3. Alexander Archipenko, "Sculpto-Painting," published in *Archipenko: International Visionary*, edited by Donald Karshan (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, 1969), p. 22.

4. Paul Kelpe, unpublished statement, January 1982, Hirshhorn Museum Collection Archive, Washington, D.C.

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden
Smithsonian Institution
January 26–April 13, 1986

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Works in the Exhibition

This checklist is arranged chronologically. Dimensions are in centimeters (and inches), height x width x depth.

1. **Pierre-Jean David d'Angers**
(French, 1788-1856)
Baron Charles N. Fabvier, 1828
Bronze, 15.1 x 15.0 x 2.1 (6 x 6 x ⅞)
Museum purchase, 1980

2. **Pierre-Jean David d'Angers**
Simon Bolivar, 1832
Bronze, 15.6 x 16.0 x 1.8 (6⅛ x 6⅜ x ¾)
Museum purchase, 1980

3. **Pierre-Jean David d'Angers**
Ambroise Paré, 1835
Bronze, 15.7 x 16.0 x 2.6
(6¼ x 6⅜ x 1⅛)
Museum purchase, 1980

4. **Pierre-Jean David d'Angers**
Filippo Buonarotti, 1830s
Bronze, 16.0 x 16.1 x 2.5
(6⅜ x 6⅜ x 1⅛)
Museum purchase, 1980

5. **Auguste-Nicolas Cain**
(French, 1821-1894)
Falcon Chasing Rabbits, 1858-59
Bronze, 79.3 x 124.2 x 8.5
(31⅛ x 48⅞ x 3⅜)
Museum purchase, 1982

6. **Auguste Rodin** (French, 1840-1917)
Third Architectural Model for "The Gates of Hell", 1880
Tinted plaster, 100.3 x 63.5 x 18.4
(39½ x 25 x 7¼)

7. **Edgar Degas** (French, 1834-1917)
Picking Apples, c. 1881, cast c. 1924
Bronze, 45.2 x 48.1 x 6.9
(17⅞ x 19 x 2¾)

8. **Medardo Rosso**
(Italian, 1858-1928)
The Doorkeeper, 1883
Wax over plaster, 37.0 x 31.5 x 16.3
(14⅝ x 12⅜ x 6⅜)

9. **Thomas Eakins**
(American, 1844-1916)
A Youth Playing the Pipes, 1883, cast 1930
Bronze, 51.2 x 29.3 x 3.8
(20⅛ x 11½ x 1½) irregular

10. **William O'Donovan**
(American, 1844-1920)
Marie Heimlicher, 1884
Bronze, 26.2 x 20.3 x .6 (10⅜ x 8 x ¼)

11. **Constantin Meunier**
(Belgian, 1831-1905)
The Brickmakers, 1896
Bronze, 67.8 x 49.8 x 12.9
(26¾ x 19⅝ x 5⅛)
Museum purchase, 1981

12. **John Singer Sargent**
(American, 1856-1925)
The Redemption, 1900
Bronze, 73.3 x 51.7 x 5.9
(28⅞ x 20¾ x 2⅜)

13. **Pablo Picasso** (Spanish, 1881-1973)
Head of a Woman, 1906
Bronze, 11.5 x 8.4 x 8.2 (4½ x 3⅜ x 3¼)

14. **Pablo Picasso**
Mask of a Woman, 1908
Bronze, 18.0 x 16.2 x 12.0
(7⅛ x 6¾ x 4¾)

15. **Elie Nadelman**
(American, b. Poland, 1882-1946)
Autumn, c. 1912
Bronze, 22.9 x 46.3 x 2.2 (9 x 18¼ x ⅞)

16. **Manolo (Manuel Martínez Hugué)**
(Spanish, 1872-1945)
Grape Gatherer, 1913
Stone, 44.3 x 24.6 x 4.1 (17½ x 9¾ x 1⅝)

17. **Alexander Archipenko**
(American, b. Russia, 1887-1964)
Woman with Fan II, 1915
Painted fiberboard and painted wood, 48.9 x 40.1 x 3.7 (19¼ x 15⅞ x1½)
in artist's frame

18. **Raymond Duchamp-Villon**
(French, 1876-1918)
The Rooster (The Gallic Cock), 1916, cast 1919
Painted bronze, 44.3 x 36.8 x 7.6
(17½ x 14½ x 3)
Museum purchase, 1977

19. **Pierre-Auguste Renoir**
(French, 1841-1919), assisted by **Louis Morel** (French, b. 1887)
Boy with a Flute, 1918
Bronze, 61.8 x 45.2 x 8.2
(24⅜ x 17⅞ x 3¼)

20. **Arthur B. Davies** (American, 1862-1928)
Pillars of Ialysos, 1920-25
Bronze, 34.5 x 29.4 x 3.4
(13⅝ x 11⅝ x 1⅜)

21. **Jacques Lipchitz**
(American, b. Lithuania, 1891-1973)
Man with a Guitar, c. 1922
Bronze, 19.2 x 27.3 x 6.8
(7⅝ x 10¾ x 2¾)

22. **Jacques Lipchitz**
Cubist Still Life, c. 1923
Bronze, 16.1 x 17.1 x 5.4
(6¼ x 6¾ x 2⅛)

23. **Enrico Glicenstein**
(American, b. Russia, 1870-1942)
Adam, 1925
Wood, 151.5 x 74.5 x 3.8
(59¾ x 29⅜ x 1½) irregular
Gift of Dreyfuss-Glicenstein Foundation, 1979

24. **Enrico Glicenstein**
Eve, 1925
Wood, 150.0 x 76.6 x 3.1
(59⅛ x 30¼ x 1¼)
Gift of Dreyfuss-Glicenstein Foundation, 1979

25. **Alexander Archipenko**
(American, b. Russia, 1887-1964)
The Past, 1926
Gilded bronze, 34.8 x 18.7 x 6.4
(13¾ x 7⅜ x 2½)

26. **Pablo Gargallo**
(Spanish, 1881-1934)
Mask of the Smiling Harlequin (fourth version), 1927
Brass, 36.6 x 33.2 x 15.3
(14⅜ x 13⅛ x 6),

27. **Paul Kelpe**
(American, b. Germany 1902)
Construction with Lock and Key, 1927
Painted wood, oil, metal, and key on fiberboard panel with painted frame, 45.6 x 32.1 x 7.0 (18 x 12⅝ x 2¾)
Museum purchase, 1983

28. **César Domela** (Dutch, b. 1900)
Construction, 1929
Painted and unpainted glass, painted metal, chromeplated brass, brass, and painted wood,
89.8 x 75.2 x 4.2 (35⅜ x 29⅝ x 1¾)

29. **Boris Lovet-Lorski**
(American, b. Lithuania, 1899-1973)
Man and Woman, early 1930s
Polished bronze, 36.2 x 18.7 x 6.5
(14¼ x 7⅜ x 2⅝)

30. **Joaquín Torres-García**
(Uruguayan, 1874-1949)
Untitled, 1931
Painted wood, 50.5 x 23.0 x 9.8
(19⅞ x 9⅛ x 3⅞)

31. **Burgoyne Diller**
(American, 1906-1965)
Construction, 1934
Painted wood and fiberboard,
61.1 x 61.0 x 2.4 (24 x 24 x 1)

32. **Käthe Kollwitz**
(German, 1867-1945)
Grave Relief: "Rest In the Peace of God's Hands", 1936
Bronze, 34.9 x 31.7 x 8.8
(13¾ x 12½ 3½)

33. **Saul Baizerman**
(American, b. Russia, 1889-1957)
Mother and Child, 1931-39
Hammered copper, 85.6 x 54.5 x 40.0
(33¼ x 21½ x 15¾) including base

34. **David Smith**
(American, 1906-1965)
Medal for Dishonor: Elements which Cause Prostitution, 1939
Bronze, 22.0 x 26.6 x 2.1 (8¾ x 10½ x ⅝)
Museum purchase, 1978

35. **David Smith**
Medal for Dishonor: War Exempt Sons of Rich, 1939-40
Bronze, 26.3 x 22.7 x 2.1 (10⅜ x 9 x ⅞)

36. **David Smith**
Medal for Dishonor: Propaganda for War, 1939-40
Bronze, 24.2 x 30.1 x 2.4
(9½ x 11⅞ x 1)

37. **David Smith**
Medal for Dishonor: Death by Gas, 1939-40
Bronze, 26.1 x 28.8 x 3.3
(10¼ x 11⅜ x 1⅜)

38. **Julio González**
(Spanish, 1876-1942)
Mask Called "Religious", 1941-42
Bronze on wood base: 29.2 x 13.8 x 10.1
(11½ x 5½ x 4)

39. **Henry Moore** (British, b. 1898)
Wall Relief: Maquette No. 1 for Bouwcentrum Wall, Rotterdam, 1955
Bronze on copper-covered wood base,
37.1 x 66.3 x 1.9 (14⅝ x 26⅛ x ¾)

40. **Pietro Consagra** (Italian, b. 1920)
Public Colloquy, 1956
Burned and carved wood,
239.0 x 120.4 x 44.5 (94½ x 47⅜ x 17½),
base: 12.8 x 109.2 x 44.5 (5 x 43 x 17½)

41. **Jasper Johns** (American, b. 1930)
Flag, 1960
Bronze, 31.5 x 48.0 x .7
(12⅜ x 18⅞ x ¼)

42. **Nancy Grossman** (American, b. 1940)
WCA #32, 1963
Painted and unpainted wood and metal, 72.8 x 47.3 x 5.7 (28¾ x 18¾ x 2¼)

43. **Red Grooms**
(American, b. 1937)
Hollywood, 1965
Acrylic on wood, metal foil, nails, and plaster, 79.0 x 91.3 x 31.5 (31⅛ x 36 x 12⅜)

44. **Mary Bauermeister** (German, b. 1934)
Psi . . . Who Knows Wh . . ., 1966
Glass, plexiglass lenses, ink, paper, wood, and acrylic on canvas mounted on wood supports, 123.7 x 94.5 x 17.5
(48⅝ x 37¼ x 6⅞)

45. **Louise Nevelson**
(American, b. Russia 1899)
Star Reflection, 1972
Painted wood, 267.7 x 249.4 x 14.0
(105 7/16 x 98 3/16 x 5½)

46. **John Okulick** (American, b. 1947)
Full Moon Harvest, 1979
Pine, painted wood, and aluminum, 133.4 x 165.8 x 18.5
(52½ x 65¼ x 7¼)
Gift of Sydney and Frances Lewis, 1985

cover: Red Grooms, *Hollywood*

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